REVIEW: *REMEMBERING TOMORROW* BY GU RU 'PHRIN LAS གུ་རु་འཕྲིན་ལས།

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Gu ru 'phrin las གུ་རु་འཕྲིན་ལས།. 2021. *Remembering Tomorrow*. https://amzn.to/3yPRlrI. 137pp, ASIN B09FLSKHND (Kindle 3.07 USD). KDP: https://amzn.to/3RiWtM1. 139pp, ISBN 139798468100134; ASIN B09F1FXT18 (paperback 6.13USD).

The retold memories of Gu ru' phrin las' paternal grandmother and other family and community elders are *Remembering Tomorrow's* nineteen narratives, offering insight into premodern Tibetan herding culture and social life. Beyond their immense cultural preservation value, these narratives are powerfully recounted, presenting choices, views, and actions challenging us to make better decisions in our contemporary lives, wherever we may live.

These and many other stories nurturing Gu ru before he attended primary school were a much valued and frequent form of entertainment before electricity came to his natal community. Some narratives have open endings encouraging readers' imagination. I particularly enjoyed the first two stories ('You Are My Mother's Mother' and 'I'm Such a Horrible Person'), which made me eager to continue reading.

Cultural values, power, beliefs, love, betrayal, and hatred are interrogated, displaying past and contemporary local realities. Plato's oft-quoted, "The measure of a man is what he does with power," resonates with what certain characters in Gu ru's stories do with their influence. For example, in 'You are My Mother's Mother' a wealthy family forces Lha mo's family to pay for Dbang phyug's injury, and A mchod a lo manipulates his respected religious identity to punish Lha mo for rejecting a marriage proposal he supported. In 'Injustice', compensation is eight yaks for the death

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of a poor man, while it is eighty yaks for the death of a rich man. Such examples emphasize the precariousness of justice and compassion, and the challenges ordinary people face in a brutal world where they are often targets of the powerful and wealthy.

"People learn lessons the hard way" is appropriate for certain stories, e.g., what Lha mo might have felt and what she must deal with when she discovers her mother having an affair with her fiancé in 'Dilemma' - betrayed simultaneously by those she trusted and loved. Similarly, Rdor lo takes advantage of his parents' love to steal their sheep to pay his debts in 'Mirror'. What will this do to Rdor lo's father and their relationship? Betrayal from loved ones is painful but presents an opportunity to learn and limit the possibilities of facing similar future situations.

It is taboo for outsiders in certain Tibetan cultures to visit a family with a newborn in the belief that the baby is spiritually weak and visitors may bring "evil" that might harm the infant. 'I am Such a Horrible Person!' illustrates this concept with Tse ring blaming his cousin, Lha mo, for frightening his baby when she visited, so he ignores her when she comes again in harsh winter. Left outside, she freezes to death. Likewise, in 'Skin, Blood, Evil', a responsible, hardworking woman is blamed when there are few dairy products and infertility.

In 'The Lucky Leader and His Son' and 'The Shepherd', the perspectives of the lucky leader and the shepherd, Tshe don, illustrate "long-sighted and short-sighted views." The lucky leader believes his illiterate son, who never attended school, can "inherit" his position. This failure to appreciate change and the realities of new policies and more competitive candidates means the son fails to be the local leader his father promised. In contrast, the shepherd sacrifices lambs without hesitation because he understands it is the only way to save the mother ewes from death in harsh winter. The shepherd's many experiences dealing with difficult situations gave him the confidence to make such a difficult decision. At the same time, the lucky leader faced a situation with changing actualities and should have been able to make plans that would have proved more successful.

Gu ru's storytelling and writing skills create immersive and, at times, disquieting reading experiences. These stories are more than memories by inspiring us with choices, standpoints, and actions to make better life decisions and might also explain *Remembering Tomorrow*. Readers interested in Tibetan culture and Tibetan pastoral society will benefit from this book.

TIBETAN TERMS
a mchod a lo ཨ་མཆོད་ཨ་ལོ།
dbang phyug དབང་ཕྱུག
gu ru གུ་རུ།
gu ru 'phrin las གུ་རུ་འཕྲིན་ལས།
lha mo ལྷ་མོ།
Lugyal Bum, klu rgyal 'bum ཀླུ་རྒྱལ་འབུམ།
rdor lo རྡོ་ལོ།
tse ring ཚེ་རིང་།
tshe don ཚེ་དོན།

CHINESE TERM

Lijiaben 李加本